United Nations E/C.19/2003/21

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
11 April 2003

Original: English

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Second session
New York, 12-23 May 2003
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*
Mandated areas

Information received from the United Nations system

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization**

I. UNESCO policies on cultural diversity and on the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage

A. Consideration of the need for an international instrument on cultural diversity

1. Canada, France, Germany, Morocco, Mexico and Senegal, with the backing of the Francophone Group at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), have expressed the hope that the elaboration of an international convention on cultural diversity may be entrusted to UNESCO. That initiative reflects a major need of the new century: taking care of cultural diversity in our globalized world, and providing the conditions to ensure that it not only survives but prospers. UNESCO is fully aware of the urgent need to act in this field as well. A document on the legal and technical aspects of a convention on cultural diversity will be submitted to the UNESCO Executive Board at its 166th session (April 2003). The Board is expected to recommend that the item be placed on the agenda of the next session of the of the UNESCO General Conference. In the same spirit, UNESCO is also responsible for another standard-setting project concerning the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage, which would complement the existing international legal protection of the world's cultural heritage at large (see para. 3 below).

* E/C.19/2003/1.

** The present document was submitted late to allow for the collation of materials from the different sections of UNESCO, including those concerned with culture and education.

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B. Preliminary draft on an international convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage

2. At its thirty-first session, the General Conference recalled the specific mandate of UNESCO for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage and decided that it should be regulated by means of an international convention, a preliminary draft of which is to be submitted to the Conference at its thirty-second session, together with the present report. The views expressed by the majority of member States at the thirty-first session indicated a preference for the model of the 1972 World Heritage Convention. During the different expert meetings (Turin, Rio de Janeiro, Paris headquarters), the majority of experts agreed on the principle of compiling a list of intangible cultural heritage to provide guidance to States parties, following the 1972 Convention experience, emphasizing, however, that adopting such a list did not mean that any heritage omitted from the list was not to be safeguarded. To that end, a glossary of terminology had been elaborated in order to further advance on the concept of intangible cultural heritage. The importance had also been stressed of civil society and local communities associating themselves with the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.

II. Activities and initiatives related to indigenous peoples, cultural diversity, intangible heritage and development

A. Proclamation of the masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity

3. An international distinction has been created by UNESCO to honour the most remarkable examples of cultural space (defined as a place in which popular and traditional cultural activities are concentrated or as the time usually chosen for some regularly occurring event) or forms of popular and traditional expression, such as languages, oral literature, music, dance, games, mythology, rituals, costumes, craftwork, architecture and other arts, as well as traditional forms of communication and information. The aim of the project is to encourage Governments, NGOs and local communities to take the lead in identifying, preserving and drawing attention to their oral and intangible cultural heritage. Contributions by individuals, groups and institutions to the systematic preservation of such heritage will also be encouraged (for further information, see http://www.unesco.org.culture/heritage/intangible).

B. Promotion of linguistic diversity: UNESCO endangered languages programme

- Over 50 per cent of the world's 6,000 languages are endangered.
- Some 96 per cent of the world's 6,000 languages are spoken by 4 per cent of the world's population.
- Some 90 per cent of the world's languages are not represented on the Internet.
- One language is disappearing on average every two weeks.

4. Both the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and General Assembly resolution 56/262 stress the need for urgent action to promote linguistic diversity as part of the world's cultural diversity. The action plan of the Declaration aims, inter alia, to (a) safeguard the linguistic heritage of humanity and giving support to expression, creation and dissemination in the greatest possible number of languages, (b) encourage linguistic diversity, while respecting mother tongues, at all levels of education, and (c) promote linguistic diversity in cyberspace. Resolution 56/262 stipulates that the United Nations should pursue multilingualism as a means of promoting, protecting and preserving diversity of languages and cultures globally, and recognizes that multilingualism promotes unity in diversity and international understanding. In March 2003, an international expert meeting on the UNESCO programme entitled "Safeguarding of endangered languages" was held at UNESCO headquarters; some 40 experts (including native speakers) and representatives of specialized NGOs attended (for further information, see http://www.unesco.org/culture/endangeredlanguages).

C. Intercultural dialogue and dialogue among religions and spiritual traditions

5. UNESCO's inter-religious dialogue programme, approved in 1995 by the General Conference and launched in Rabat, Morocco, with the title "Roads of faith", aims to promote dialogue among different religions and spiritual traditions in a world where inter- or intra-religious conflicts are becoming more widespread as a result of ignorance and misunderstandings of other cultures, beliefs and ways of life. The programme is a major aspect of intercultural dialogue, laying stress on the interactions and cross-cultural borrowing which have taken place throughout history up to modern times. The organization's programme seeks to promote reciprocal knowledge in order to foster religious and cultural pluralism and overcome misinterpretations.

6. The programme takes into account the protection of religious and spiritual minorities which might be threatened in their beliefs and practices and thereby lose their identity in societies where their rights are not fully recognized. It also stresses the importance of traditional knowledge, of religions and spiritualities that respect human dignity, the environment in which they live and the positive role they play in diffusing tensions and preventing conflicts when they work together, hand in hand (for further information, see http://www.unesco.org/culture/dialogue/religion).

D. Mapping indigenous cultural resources and identifying best practices in regard to cultural pluralism

7. At its thirty-first session in November 2001, the General Conference drew attention to the importance of preserving indigenous cultural resources, which are particularly vulnerable, so as to ensure their continuity and transmission to future generations. That priority must be based on a pluralistic approach, which means giving policy expression to the reality of cultural diversity (article 2 of the Declaration). Thus, the action plan of the Declaration aims to foster the exchange of knowledge and best practices in regard to cultural pluralism with a view to

facilitating, in diversified societies, the inclusion and participation of persons and groups from varied cultural backgrounds.

8. Case studies and practical illustrations are needed to demonstrate that cultural diversity is a source of enrichment for society. Therefore, UNESCO will continue to support pilot projects at work in the field (e.g., South Africa, Gabon, the Philippines, Colombia). Some projects are also financed through extrabudgetary funds, such as the Japanese Funds in Trust cooperation which is currently funding the project entitled "Training of culture promoters of nine indigenous communities in three States of the Mexican Republic" implemented by the UNESCO office in Mexico, in cooperation with the National Council for Culture of the Mexican Republic. Numerous other projects operating around the globe would be able to take part in those exchanges of expertise. Training and consultation activities in this area and development of methodological tools could also be foreseen to the benefit of the most marginalized communities for the next biennium (2004-2005) to enable them to take part in this exchange of expertise (for further information, see http://www.unesco.org/culture/indigenous).

E. Tourism respectful of cultures and societies that contribute to local development

9. Current projects include the establishment of a teaching network and UNESCO chairs for research in cultural tourism. A project on a strategy for sustainable development of tourism in the Sahara for the elimination of poverty proposes to the member States concerned to rethink cultural tourism strategies in West Africa and to strengthen cooperation to that end. Similar initiatives are carried out in the Baltic States. In the framework of the safeguarding of Angkor in Cambodia, one project seeks to reinforce the participation of local populations for the development of tourism at Angkor and to study the impact of tourism on its cultures. By bringing together experts and decision makers, UNESCO seeks to contribute to an improvement in tourism strategies. Those strategies take into account the preservation of cultural heritage and ensure that tourists are satisfied and that mutual respect exists between the tourist and the host populations, while producing positive effects on local development. Care should be taken to ensure that tourism has no undesirable effects on human dignity and does not erode culture or transform it into a mere tourist attraction (for further information, see http://www.unesco.org/culture/tourism).

F. Cultural approach to HIV/AIDS prevention and care

10. A UNESCO-Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) project, entitled "A cultural approach to HIV/AIDS prevention and care" which was launched in 1998, stimulates discussion on prevention and reconsiders existing tools within a cultural perspective. It aims to discover the interaction between cultural norms and HIV/AIDS issues and to adjust prevention and care accordingly. In the first phase of the project (1998-1999), nine country assessments were carried out in three regions: sub-Saharan Africa, South-East Asia and the Caribbean. The findings were discussed at subregional workshops held in Cuba, Zimbabwe and Thailand in 1999 and in Egypt and Morocco in 2000. An international conference, held in

Nairobi in October 2000, drew conclusions from the project's first phase and adopted a plan of action for its follow-up.

11. The second phase of the project is focused on training, networking and development of methodological tools, and their implementation in pilot projects in Uganda and major pedagogical lines for a handbook to be used in India. Past and present initiatives supported by the project have included but are not limited to educational opportunities for media on culturally sensitive and appropriate coverage of HIV/AIDS issues; educational opportunities for youth on HIV/AIDS prevention; development of educational material in local languages; use of theatre, art and media to convey HIV/AIDS information and reduce discrimination and stigmatization etc. (for further information on the above-mentioned UNESCO/UNAIDS project, as well as all published reports and documents, see http://www.unesco.org/aids).

III. Education and indigenous peoples

A. Education in multilingual societies

12. UNESCO has produced a set of guidelines which represent the organization's current approach to language and education in the twenty-first century, and which should serve to state the position of the international community in its various member States. The guidelines are based on a review of previous declarations and recommendations, and represent the diversity of thinking on this complex and challenging issue. They are particularly relevant to indigenous peoples. Three basic principles are supported, as follows:

(a) UNESCO supports mother tongue instruction as a means of improving educational quality by building upon the knowledge and experience of the learners and teachers;

(b) UNESCO supports bilingual and/or multilingual education at all levels of education as a means of promoting both social and gender equality and as a key element of linguistically diverse societies;

(c) UNESCO supports language as an essential component of intercultural education in order to encourage understanding between different population groups and ensure respect for fundamental rights.

13. A UNESCO position paper, entitled "Education in a multilingual world" which sets out language policy and education, is available in the six languages of the organization.

14. As examples of ongoing activities in line with the above-mentioned paper, UNESCO Bangkok is encouraging countries in the Asia and Pacific region to undertake research to find out the effectiveness of using a mother tongue and bilingual approach in literacy programmes. A manual on developing adult education programmes in minority language communities, focusing on mother tongue and bilingual education, is being prepared in selected countries.

B. Documenting good practice in quality education for indigenous peoples

15. Education is a fundamental human right, as stated in the World Declaration on Education for All and reaffirmed in the Dakar Framework for Action. Both documents express the commitment of the international community to the provision of quality education for all in order to meet the basic learning needs of all children, youth and adults of today's culturally and linguistically diverse societies.

16. However, millions of people are still denied their right to education and indigenous peoples are among the most affected and disadvantaged, so that there is still a need for greater recognition of their diverse and distinct cultures and languages and their educational needs and rights.

17. The Dakar Framework for Action sends a clear message in that regard, stating that education for all must take account of the needs of the poor and most disadvantaged, including working children, remote rural dwellers and nomads, and ethnic and linguistic minorities, children, young people and adults affected by conflict, HIV/AIDS, hunger and poor health, and those with special learning needs (for further information contact: http://www.unesco.org/education).

IV. Overview of modalities of partnership between UNESCO and indigenous peoples

18. For further information on partnerships between UNESCO and indigenous peoples, contacts are as follows:

(a) Relations with national organizations: http://www.unesco.org/ncp/natcom;

(b) Relations with international NGOs and intergovernmental organizations: http://erc.unesco.org/ong;

(c) Goodwill ambassadors: http://portal.unesco.org/ev.php.